**Landforms & Climate**

South Korea, located in northeast Asia, is a peninsula. The terrain is generally mountainous, though limited lowland areas lie along the coast, particularly in the west. There are more than 3,000 tiny islands off the southern and western coasts of South Korea. South Korea's coastline is rocky, characterized by sheer cliffs, sea stacks, creeks, and few beaches. The most important watercourses in South Korea are the Kum, Naktong, and Han rivers. The Kum and Han rivers flow from the Taebaek Mountains into the western lowlands and empty into the Yellow Sea. South Korea has four distinct [seasons](http://www.worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Countries/Display.aspx?regionid=-1&countryid=167&pagetypeid=1): summer is hot and humid, winter is cold and dry, and spring and fall are moderate. Most rain falls from June through September, and average precipitation is generally between 35 and 60 inches annually. Typhoons are possible in late summer and can cause severe flooding, while snowfall is heavy during the winter months. The north is significantly colder than the south.

**Natural Resources & Agriculture**

[South Korea](http://www.worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Countries/Display.aspx?regionid=-1&countryid=167&pagetypeid=2) has extremely limited mineral resources including gold, silver, tungsten, and lead. The country's graphite and tungsten deposits are the leading among the planet. Most of the South Korea's oil comes from the Persian Gulf area named the fifth-largest importer of oil in 2006. Because of its limited energy resources, South Korea has been using hydropower generated along the Han River to supply some of its electrical needs. Because the terrain of South Korea is mountainous, only a small percentage of the country's surface area is [arable land](http://www.worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Countries/Display.aspx?regionid=-1&countryid=167&pagetypeid=2) that can be used for food production. No more than one-quarter of South Korea is used for crop cultivation and agriculture contributes less than 4% to the country's [gross domestic product](http://www.worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Countries/Display.aspx?regionid=-1&countryid=167&pagetypeid=2). Rice is the principal crop and is grown on approximately 60% of the country's agricultural land. Barley, wheat, soybeans, potatoes, millet, and an assortment of vegetables are also grown in South Korea. Logging is mainly limited to the coniferous forests of Kangwon and North Kyongsang and imported wood forms the basis of a successful plywood industry. South Korea has been a leader in the fishing industry since the 1960s.

**Environment**

There is a great variety of vegetation in [South Korea](http://www.worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Countries/Display.aspx?regionid=-1&countryid=167&pagetypeid=3), with more than 4,500 plant species currently documented in the country. Only a few large pockets of trees remain. Air pollution and [acid rain](http://www.worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Countries/Display.aspx?regionid=-1&countryid=167&pagetypeid=3) in crowded metropolitan areas are some of South Korea's most vexing environmental issues, along with water pollution from sewage and industrial waste. Another concern is the rate at which rivers are being dammed and diverted for the irrigation of rice fields. Dam building destroys riparian habitats that are some of the most important areas for wildlife and prevents migration of species up and down rivers.

**facts & figures**

**Communications**

**Internet**  
Users: 34,120,000; % of pop.: 69.9% (2006).

**Television**  
42 sets per 100 population (2007)

**Telephones**  
Sets in use: 26,866,000; per 1,000 pop.: 558 (2006). Mobile cellular subscribers: 43,500,000 (2007).

**Newspapers**  
Major dailies: 139 (2004). Combined circulation: 17,700,000; per 1,000 pop.: 397 (1996).

**Education**

**School System**  
South Korea's educational system begins at the age of six with six years of primary school. After three years of early secondary school, students may continue for three years in an academic, specialized, or vocational upper secondary school.

**Mandatory Education**  
9 years, from ages 6 to 15.

**Average Years Spent in School for Current Students**  
17 years (male: 18 years; female: 15 years) (2007)

**Primary School-aged Children Enrolled in Primary School**  
98% (male: [not available]; female: [not available]) (2007)

**Secondary School-aged Children Enrolled in Secondary School**  
96% (male: 99%; female: 96%) (2007)

**Enrollment in Postsecondary Education**  
86% (male: 100%; female: 72%) (2007)

**Pupil/Teacher Ratio**  
Primary: 27 students/teacher; secondary: 18 students/teacher (2007)

**Illiteracy**  
2% (2002)

**Energy and Natural Resources**

**Electric Power Generation**  
403,200,000,000 kilowatt hours (kWh); kWh. per capita consumption: 7,639 (2007).

**Nuclear Power Plants and Output**  
20 (2006)

**Crude Oil Production**  
None

**Natural Gas Production**  
None

**Natural Resources**  
Coal, graphite, tungsten

**Geography**

**Location**  
South Korea is located in the southern part of the Korean peninsula in eastern Asia. North Korea, which makes up the rest of the peninsula, is the only country that borders South Korea. The Sea of Japan lies to the east, the East China Sea to the south, and the Yellow Sea to the west.

**Time Zone**  
14 hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Standard

**Land Borders (miles)**  
148 miles

**Coastline**  
1,499 miles

**Capital**  
Seoul

**Area (sq miles)**  
38,328

**Climate**  
Winters are cold and dry, with an average temperature of 21°F. Summers are hot and humid, with an average temperature of 77°F, although temperatures of 90°F to 100°F are not uncommon. Monsoon rains occur in July and August, and snow usually falls from December through February.

**Land Use**  
21.0% cropland; 0.9% permanent pasture; 65.5% forests and woodland; 12.6% other.

**Arable Land (%)**  
21%

**Arable Land Per Capita**  
0.1 acre(s)

**Health**

**Average Life Expectancy**  
77 years (2005-2010 projection)

**Average Life Expectancy (Male)**  
73 years (2005-2010 projection)

**Average Life Expectancy (Female)**  
80 years (2005-2010 projection)

**Crude Birth Rate (per 1,000 population (2005-2010 projection))**  
10 per 1,000 population (2005-2010 projection)

**Crude Death Rate (per 1,000 population (2005-2010 projection))**  
7 per 1,000 population (2005-2010 projection)

**Maternal Mortality (per 100,000 live births)**  
20 per 100,000 live births (2003)

**Infant Mortality (per 100,000 live births)**  
8 per 1,000 live births (2000-2010 projection)

**Doctors (per 10,000 population)**  
16 per 10,000 population (2003)

**Industry and Labor**

**Agricultural Products**  
Rice, roots, fruit, vegetables, barley, onions, potatoes, fowl, pigs, cattle, dairy products, fish, eggs.

**Industry Products**  
Synthetic fabrics and fibers, clothing, footwear, fertilizers, motor vehicles, electronics, cotton, cigarettes, paper products, chemicals, steel, ships, processed foods.

**Labor Profile**  
Agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishing - 7.7%; manufacturing, resource extraction, and utilities - 18.4%; transportation and communication - 6.3%; construction - 7.9%; government, community, and social services - 21.3%; commerce - 37.6%; other - 0.7% (2006).

**Military**

**Total Active Armed Forces**  
687,700 (2004)

**Active Armed Forces (% of population)**  
1% (2009)

**Annual Military Expenditure**  
28,600,000,000 (2008)

**Military Service**  
Service in the South Korean military is by conscription, with terms lasting 26 months for army recruits and 30 months for the navy and air force.

**National Finances**

**Currency**  
South Korean won

**Budget**  
Revenues: $162,923,900,000 (2004 projection); $144,090,800,000 (2003)   
Expenditures: $143,802,600,000 (2004 projection); $125,292,700,000 (2003)

**Budget Deficit (% of GDP)**  
0 None; surplus: 2.8% of GDP (2004 projection)

**Expenditures by Function as % of Total**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Defense | 12.5% |
| Education | 17.7% |
| Health | 0.4% |
| Social security and welfare | 14.3% |

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**  
$947,010,000,000 (2008)

**GDP Per Capita**  
$19,575 (2008)

**GDP Contribution by Sector**  
Agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing - 3.2%; mining, manufacturing, and utilities - 30.5%; construction - 9.1%; wholesale and retail trade, hotels, and restaurants - 9.4%; transportation and communication - 7.2%; finance, insurance, real estate, and business services - 21.2%; government services, education, and health care - 15.8%; other services - 3.5% (2006)

**Economic Aid**  
Extended: $334,000,000 (2003)

**External Public Debt**  
380,500,000,000 (2008)

**International Liquidity**  
Reserves (minus gold): $198,996,600,000 (2004)

**Population**

**Population**  
48,508,972 (2009)

**World Population Rank**  
25 th (2009)

**Population Density (people per square mile)**  
1,266 (2009)

**Population Distribution**  
82% urban (2007 estimate)

**Age Distribution**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 0-14: | 16.8% |
| 15-64: | 72.3% |
| 65+: | 10.8% |

(2009)

**Median Age**  
37.3 years (2009 estimate)

**Population Growth Rate (% per year, 2005-2010 projection)**  
0.4% per year (2005-2010 projection)

**Net Migration Rate (per 1000 population)**  
0.0 (2009)

**Trade**

**Imports**  
Petroleum and petroleum products, organic chemicals, iron, steel, foodstuffs, livestock, textiles, metals, electronic equipment, machinery and transportation equipment, grains.

**Total Imports**  
$314,434,000,000 (2006); $261,209,000,000 (2005); $224,460,000,000 (2004).

**Exports**  
Electrical equipment, automobiles, ships, textiles, footwear, fish, iron and steel.

**Total Exports**  
$332,310,000,000 (2006); $284,333,000,000 (2005); $253,740,000,000 (2004).

**Trading Partners**  
(Imports) Japan - 20.3%; United States - 13.9%; China - 12.3%; Saudi Arabia - 5.2%; Germany - 3.8% (2003).

**Balance of Payments**  
2004: +$38,675,000,000   
2003: +$25,791,000,000   
2002: +$11,769,000,000

**Weights and Measures**  
The metric system is in use, but several traditional measures are also used.

**Transportation**

**Roads**  
Total miles: 63,562; paved miles: 48,828 (2005).

**Vehicles**  
Registrations: 16,272,152 (2003). Passenger cars: 10,278,923; persons per car: 5 (2003). Trucks, buses, and commercial vehicles: 4,263,036 (2003). Motorcycles and mopeds: 1,730,193 (2003).

**Railroads**  
Total track-miles: 2,157 (2006).

**Ports**  
Major: 9--including Pusan, Inchon, Donghae, Kunsan, Gunsan, Mokpo, Pohang, and Ulsan.